

USING THE ELECTRONIC PRFFGRAM GUIDE
TO SYNCHRONIZE INTERACTIVITY
WITH BROADCAST PROGRAMS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In a broadcasting system, an electronic program guide (EPG) is used to determine what broadcast program is on a given channel at a given time in a given location. With the particular determined broadcast program as an input, timing offset objects defining interactive content related to the determined broadcast program can be retrieved from a timing offsets database. Each timing offset object specifies a time from the beginning of the program, an act to perform at the time, and a reference to interactive content on which to perform the act at the time. With the reference to the interactive content as an input, an interactive application or other interactive content can be retrieved from an interactive content database. The EPG, the timing offsets database, and the interactive content database may be located logically or physically together or separately, and they may be cached locally or referenced from an external source. If the above determinations have been made upstream from the consumer premise equipment (CPE), the act is performed on the interactive content and the resulting interactivity is inserted into the broadcast stream to be received by a CPE. If the above determinations have been made by the CPE itself, the act is performed on the interactive content and there is no need to insert the resulting interactivity into the broadcast stream as the CPE already possesses its instructions. Finally, at the time of the timing offset, the CPE uses the interactive content to provide interactivity to the viewer.